

Message Text

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SUBJECT: FOUR PARTIES HOLD ELECTORAL CONGRESSES MARCH 26-27

REF: BRUSSELS 2958

SUMMARY: IN PREPARATION FOR THE APRIL 17 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS,
FOUR OF BELGIUM'S MAJOR POLITICAL PARTIES HELD ELECTORAL CONGRESSES
OVER THE WEEKEND: THE FRANCOPHONE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS (PSC)AT BINCHE,
AND THE FLEMISH LIBERALS (PVV)AT ANTWERP - BOTH ON MARCH 26. THE
FLEMISH SOCIAL CHRISTIANS (CVP)MET AT ANTWERP, AND THE
SOCIALISTS (PSB/BSP)AT BRUSSELS,MARCH 27. END SUMMARY.

1. PSC AND CVP ORATORS CONCENTRATED THEIR FIRE ON THE SOCIALISTS,
SPARING BOTH THE FLEMING AND THE FRANCOPHONE LIBERALS.THE PSC'S
NOTHOMB REMINDED THE SOCIALISTS THAT HIS PARTY ALONE COULD
PROVIDE A SOLID FOUNDATIO IN WALLONIA FOR THE NEXT GOVERNMENT
OF BELGIUM.

THE SOCIALIST PARTY,HE SAID,WAS NOT INDISPENSABLE.PSC PARTY
PRESIDENT GRAMME ADMITTING DIFFICULTY IN MAKING UP LISTS OF
PSC CANDIDATES,BECAUSE OF INTRA-PARTY TENSIONS,BOASTED THAT THE
SOCIALISTS HAD FAILED TO ACHIEVE DEFECTIONS FROM THE PSC LEFT.

2. IN ANTWERP CVP PRESIDENT MARTENS BLAMED THE SOCIALIST FOR
FAILURE TO AGREE ON A CONSTITUTIONAL REVISIO WHICH WOULD HAVE MADE
POSSIBLE DEFINITIVE REGIONALIZATION.IN A MILITANT SPEECH MARTENS
DISMISSED THE ORGANIZATION AS HAVING MINIMAL INFLUENCE IN THE NATIONAL
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PARTY.ON THE DIVISIVE ABORTION ISSUE,MARTENS TOOK A HARD LINE:
THE CVP INTENDS TO DEFEND LIFE-INCLUDING THE LIVE OF THE UNBORN.
PRIME MINISTER TINDEMANS'CLOSING ADDRESS TO THE CVP CONGRESS
WAS MORE RESTRAINED,STRESSING THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF HIS GOVERNMENT
AND DENYING THE SOCIALIST CHARGE THAT BELGIUM HAS BECOME A CVP-
STATE.

TO OVATION ACCORDED THE PRIME MINISTER SUGGESTED THAT HIS PERSONAL POPULARITY REMAINS VERY HIGH- AT LEAST IN PARTY CIRCLES.

3.FLEMISH LIBERAL ORATORS AT ANTWERP MARCH 27 DEPICTED BELGIUM AT THE CORSSROADS,FACED WITH A CHOICE BETWEEN SOCIALISM AND DEMOCRATIC

CO-EXISTENCE.THE WARNED THAT THE MAJORITY OF FLEMINGS ARE NOT READY TO LET BELGIUM BE GOVERNED BY WALLOON LEFTISTS.

4.THE PSB CONGRESS IN BRUSSELS,ALSO ON MARCH 27, RE-ELECTED ANDRE COOLS AND WILLY CLAES AS PARTY CO- PRESIDENTS AS WELL AS A TEN-MAN BUREAU(EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE).THE TOP FIVE VOTE-GETTERS IN THE BUREAU ELECTION WERE GUY SPITAELS,LEON HUREZ,J.M.DEHOUSSE, GUY MATHOT,AND EDMOND LEBURTON - IN THAT ORDER.PSB ORATORS DENIED THAT THE SOCIALISTS HAD RULED OUT ANY PARTY AS AUQO SIBLE COALITION PARTNER,BUT CO-PRESINT COOLS,THE VOICE OF PSB'S WALLOON LEFT, OPINED THAT THE LIBERALS,BY TAKING ISSUED WITH PSB POLICIES,HAD EXCLUDED THEMSELVESCOOLS ALSO ASSERTED THAT " THE SOCIALISTS ARE NOT CONDEMNED TO GOVERN WITH THE SOCIAL CHRISTIANS." HENRI SIMONET,THE PSB LEADER JUDGED MOST LIKELY TO LEAD THE SOCIALISTS INTO COALITION GOVERNMENT,SOUNDED A LESS STRIDENT NOTE.HE SAID PSB WOULD ENTER THE GOVERNMENT- BUT ONLY AFTER REFRESHMENT OF THE BALANCE OF POWER VIS-A-VIS THE CVP.

5.COMMENT: THE PARTISAN FIREBRANDS,MARTENS AND COOLS,ARE NO DOUBT DELIBERATELY MAKING IT HARD FOR SOCIALISTS AND CHRISTIANS TO SET DOWN AND NEGOTIATE A COALITION DEAL AFTER THE ELECTIONS.

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